

BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM

Country Reports on Terrorism 2014

Report

SRI LANKA

Overview: The 2009 military defeat of the terrorist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) marked the beginning of what many hoped was a new era for the country. The Sri Lankan government maintained a strong military presence in post-conflict areas and continued to voice concern about the possible reemergence of pro-LTTE sympathizers. Although the Sri Lankan government maintains a comprehensive counterterrorism stance, counterterrorism cooperation and training with the United States in 2014 was limited.

Sri Lankan police apprehended a small number of Maldivian nationals attempting to transit through Sri Lanka to Syria allegedly to become foreign terrorist fighters.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Counterterrorism legislation in Sri Lanka has historically focused on eliminating the LTTE. In 2014, the Government of Sri Lanka continued to implement the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), enacted in 1982 as a wartime measure, which gives security forces sweeping powers to search, arrest, and detain individuals. Embassy Colombo had significant concerns regarding use of the PTA by the previous government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa to harass and detain public actors under the guise of seeking to revive the LTTE. The new government has pledged to end the broad application of the PTA, and has also taken steps to reduce the military's role in civil society and its control of land in security zones in the north.

Although U.S. counterterrorism assistance to Sri Lanka has generally been limited, the Sri Lankan government maintained its partnership with the U.S. Departments of State, Homeland Security, Defense, and Energy on securing its maritime border. The U.S. Coast Guard, under the Department of State's Export Control and Related Border Security program, continued to train Sri Lankan Coast Guard and Navy personnel on border and export control matters, and the Government of Sri Lanka continued to cooperate with U.S. Customs and Border Protection through the Container Security Initiative.

Border security remained a significant issue for the Sri Lankan government. In 2014, the International Organization for Migration trained 54 newly-recruited Sri Lankan Department of Immigration and Emigration officers in techniques to improve border surveillance and combat human trafficking.

The government continued to collaborate with the EU Immigration Department on an Advanced Passenger Information system, which transmits passenger information to Sri Lankan immigration officials upon arrival. Collaboration with the Australian government continued on the development of a passport fingerprinting program that was originally scheduled to go online in 2014. The data generated from these collection systems will be significant assets to the Sri Lankan government in its efforts to control and combat illegal migration.

In March 2014, the government announced it had designated 16 organizations and 422 individuals as terrorist entities and/or facilitating terrorist financing designed to help revive the LTTE. The Sri Lankan government did not provide information regarding criteria for designation or any supporting evidence. A team from the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Director's office, which visited Sri Lanka in October 2014, expressed concerns the designation process may not have met UN standards.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Sri Lanka belongs to the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism, a Financial Action Task Force (FATF)-style regional body. While neither an important regional financial center nor a preferred center for money laundering, several factors make the country vulnerable to money laundering and terrorist finance. These include a lack of transparent tender mechanisms in government projects, past experience with terrorism, tax evasion, and a large informal economy. Legal remittance flows through the formal banking system have increased sharply in recent years, and will surpass US \$7 billion in 2014. Remittances originate from Sri Lanka's substantial overseas workforce, primarily in the Middle East. For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *2014 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume 2, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*: <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/index.htm>.

Regional and International Cooperation: Sri Lanka continued to cooperate with a number of donor countries, including the United States, to improve its land and maritime border security. These efforts also enhanced the government's capacity to interdict potential foreign terrorist fighters attempting to transit through the country. Sri Lanka is one of 85 partner nations in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, and in 2014 served as GICNT co-chair.

In November, representatives from Sri Lankan law enforcement and judicial personnel attended the three-day Ninth Regional Workshop for Judges, Prosecutors, and Police Officers on effectively Countering Terrorism in South Asia in the Maldives. In December, the Sri Lankan government held the Galle Dialogue, which featured multilateral discussion by international security force representatives on issues of regional security in South Asia, including maritime terrorism.

Countering Radicalization to Violence and Violent Extremism: Sri Lanka continued to operate a rehabilitation program for former alleged LTTE combatants, although limited access by independent bodies to known rehabilitation camps precluded reliable evaluations of the government's efforts.